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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ELECTORAL COMMISSION SAYS NO TO UDPS DEMANDS

REF: KINSHASA 00023

1. (U) The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) announced January 7 that it would not reopen registration centers for the convenience of UDPS members who boycotted the registration process from June to December 2005. CEI Director Abbe Malu Malu noted that the time constraints of the electoral calendar made a nationwide reopening impossible. (Note: Approximately 15 registration centers in Bandundu and Equateur remained open through January 9.) Malu Malu did indicate, however, that the CEI would allow those who did not register to vote (such as UDPS President Etienne Tshisekedi) to enroll as candidates.

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2. (U) UDPS Secretary General Remy Masamba petitioned CEI on January 5 to reopen registration centers to facilitate the inclusion of UDPS members in the forthcoming elections. Tshisekedi had chosen not to register during the registration

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period and instead called for a boycott of the process. In a January 1 public statement (reftel), he reversed himself and said the UDPS would participate in the electoral process.

3. (SBU) Comment: Tshisekedi and the UDPS have begun to realize they are not in a very strong position to be imposing conditions on the CEI. A general reopening of the voter registration process would be problematic in any case in view of the very tight timelines to prepare final voter lists prior to general elections. It is also clear that with over 25 million registered voters, the vast majority of eligible citizens have already registered, including presumed UDPS supporters. In response to UDPS demands, the CEI has echoed the sentiment of the CIAT, the Transitional Government, and others not disposed to reopen registration to accommodate Tshisekedi and the UDPS. In effect, Malu Malu has called the

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UDPS President's bluff. Permitting him to run for office without registering to vote takes away his pretext for claiming he and his party are being excluded from elections. End comment.

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